

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Corporal Jonathan Yale and Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter, who grew up in different parts of this Nation but gave their lives to this country together in Iraq. Both have been nominated for the Navy Cross for their actions on April 22, 2008, and both are owed a great gratitude by this Nation for their actions.

Tony Perry--a journalist who I got to know in Fallujah in 2004--from the LA Times, who has covered this story, describes what transpired that morning best. Corporal Jonathan Yale, 21, grew up in poor rural Virginia. He had joined the Marine Corps to put structure in his life and to help support his mother and sister. He was within a few days of heading home.

Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter, 19, was from a comfortable middle class suburb on Long Island. As a boy, he had worn military garb and he had felt the pull of adventure and patriotism. He had just arrived in Iraq.

On April 22, 2008, the two were assigned to guard the main gate to Joint Security Station Nasser in Ramadi, the capital of the Anbar province, once an insurgent stronghold, and still a very dangerous place. Dozens of marines and Iraqi police lived at the compound and some were still sleeping after all-night patrols when Yale and Haerter reported for duty that warm, sultry morning. Yale, respected for his quiet, efficient manner, was assigned to show Haerter how to take over his duties. Haerter had volunteered to watch the main gate, even though it was considered the most hazardous of the compound's three guards station because it could be approached from a busy thoroughfare.

The sun had barely risen when the two sentries spotted a 20-foot long truck headed toward the gate, weaving with increasing speed through the concrete barriers to the gate. Two Iraqi police officers ran for their lives, so did several Iraqi police on the adjacent street. Yale and Haerter tried to waive off this truck, but it just kept coming. They opened fire, Yale with the machine gun, Haerter with an M-16. Their bullets peppered the radiator and windshield. The truck slowed, but kept rolling. A few dozen feet from the gate the big truck exploded. Investigators found that it was loaded with over 2,000 pounds of explosives and that its driver, his hand on a ``dead-man switch," was determined to commit suicide and slaughter the marines and Iraqi police.

The thunderous explosion rocked much of Ramadi, interrupting the morning call to prayers for many mosques. A nearby mosque and a home were flattened. The blast ripped a crater five feet

deep and 20 feet across into the street. Shards of concrete shattered everywhere, and choking dust filled the air.

Haerter was dead, Yale was dying. Three marines about 300 feet away were injured, so were eight Iraqi police and two dozen civilians, but several dozen other nearby marines and Iraqi police, while shaken, were unhurt.

Mr. Speaker, we all hope that in times of great crisis, we will rise to the occasion and do the right thing. Haerter and Yale rose to the occasion and defended their fellow Marines. It is an honor to call them fellow Marines.

Major General John Kelly, Commanding General, First Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) interviewed the witnesses himself. What he learned from these interviews led him to nominate the two for the Navy Cross, the second highest award for combat bravery for the Marine Corps and the United States Navy. In General Kelly's statement in support of the Navy Cross, he writes: ``Because they did what they did, only 2 families had their hearts broken on 22 April, rather than as many as 50. These families will never know how truly close they came to a knock on their door that night."

We are winning in Iraq and Afghanistan because of brave Marines like Corporal Jonathan T. Yale and Lance Corporal Jordan D. Haerter. To their families I offer my heartfelt condolences. And to Corporal Yale and Corporal Haerter, I say, Marines, job well done.

This is but one example of the bravery and sacrifice of over 4,000 men and women who have given their lives to the cause of liberty since 2001 and the over 1.5 million men and women who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and come home, and, of course, the over 150,000 that are serving now.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to include for the Record Tony Perry's entire article and Major General Kelly's statement in support of the award of the Navy Cross. I encourage all of my colleagues and urge all Americans to read about these two brave Marines and keep their families in their prayers.